

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 05154 01 OF 02 241552Z

42

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

ACDA-05 SAM-01 SAB-01 MC-02 EB-07 OMB-01 /096 W

----- 023748

R 241512Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5666

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DAMASCUS 5154

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE, EG, SA

SUBJ: SYRIAN APPROACH TO LEBANON: AN ASSESSMENT

1. SUMMARY: SYRIA'S APPROACH TO LEBANESE CRISIS
HAS BEEN AMBIVALENT BUT ON WHOLE CONSTRUCTIVE.
LEBANESE HAVE SOUGHT SYRIAN INVOLVEMENT; NO OTHER
COUNTRY HAS AS MANY ASSETS OR AS MUCH WILL TO ENGAGE IN
THE PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION. END SUMMARY

2. IN WAKE OF KARAME VISIT TO DAMASCUS IT MIGHT
BE USEFUL TO REVIEW SYRIAN APPROACH TO LEBANESE
CRISIS. KARAME, ACCORDING TO DAMASCUS MEDIA,
"WELCOMED THE SYRIAN INITIATIVE." CONSEQUENTLY,
"THE DOOR IS NOW OPEN FOR CARRYING OUT REFORMS."
WHILE IN DAMASCUS KARAME AND ACCOMPANYING DELEGATION
INCLUDING COS NASRALLAH, DEP COS KAN'AN, DIRGEN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DAMASC 05154 01 OF 02 241552Z

OF PRIME MINISTRY MSEIKEH AND G-2 CHIEF JULES

BUSTANI MET WITH PRES. ASAD, FONMIN KHADDAM,
PRIMIN AYYUBI, COS SHIHABI AND AF COMMANDER
NAJI JAMIL.

3. PUBLICITY GIVEN KARAME VISIT ACCENTUATES
POSITIVE ASPECTS OF SYRIAN DEALINGS WITH LEBANON,
BUT OF COURSE DOES NOT TELL WHOLE STORY. ON
NEGATIVE SIDE, SYRIANS CONTINUE TO SUPPLY ARMS
AND FINANCIAL AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT TO THEIR
PROTEGES IN LEBANON. WE HAVE BEEN
ENCOURAGED BY RECENT INTELLIGENCE CABLES INDICATING
THAT SARG MAY BE MAKING SOME EFFORT TO EXERT MORE
CONTROL OVER ARMS DISTRIBUTION.

4. THAT SYRIANS HAVE PURSUED POLICY DESIGNED TO
ADVANCE THEIR OWN INTERESTS IN LEBANON IS AS
EVIDENT AS IT IS NORMAL FOR STRONGER STATE TO
ACT VIS-A-VIS A WEAKER NEIGHBOR. THAT SOME ELEMENTS
OF SYRIAN POLICY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO EXACERBATION
OF CONFLICT -- IN PARTICULAR ARMS SHIPMENTS -- IS
ALSO EVIDENT. BUT THESE FACTORS MUST NOT BE
JUDGED IN ISOLATION. BASED ON EVIDENCE PRESENTLY
AVAILABLE, WE CONCLUDE THAT SYRIAN APPROACH, TAKEN
IN ITS TOTALITY, COMPRISES CONSTRUCTIVE EFFORT TO
RESTORE STABILITY TO LEBANESE POLITICAL SYSTEM.

5. SARG HAS EVINCED WILLINGNESS TO MELD SELF-
INTEREST COMPONENT INTO APPROACH DESIGNED TO ENHANCE
OVERALL SETTLEMENT PROCESS. RECORD REVEALS
THAT SARG HAS ORCHESTRATED ITS ACCESS TO LEBANESE
POLITICAL SYSTEM RESULTING FROM ITS GEOGRAPHICAL
PROXIMITY, ITS POLITICAL CAPITAL AMONG LEFTIST
GROUPS AND MODERATE PLO ELEMENTS, AND ITS CAREFULLY
CULTIVATED TIES TO CHRISTIANS AND MODERATE MUSLIMS
TO PROMOTE AGREEMENT ACCEPTABLE TO ALL KEY PARTIES
CONCERNED.

6. SYRIAN PERCEPTIONS OF LEBANON AND LEBANESE POLI-
TICIANS ARE FAR MORE NUANCED THAN IN 1958.
ASAD'S EARLY 1975 VISIT TO LEBANON WAS REGARDED IN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 DAMASC 05154 01 OF 02 241552Z

BOTH COUNTRIES AS SYRIA'S LONG AWAITED FORMAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT
OF LEBANESE INDEPENDENCE. KHADDAM/SHIHABI MEDIATION EFFORTS
EXPOSED WIDE RANGE OF LEBANESE PERSONALITIES TO
SYRIAN AIMS AND METHODS. BY MOST ACCOUNTS WE HAVE
MONITORED FROM BEIRUT, THE TWO SARG MEDIATORS
EXHORTED BOTH TRADITIONAL FRIENDS AND CRITICS
TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO COMPROMISES THAT WOULD
GENERATE MOVEMENT TOWARD RESTORATION OF STABILITY

AND REFORM OF LEBANESE POLITICAL SYSTEM. THESE EFFORTS HAVE STALLED, PARTIALLY DUE TO OUTBREDS OF VIOLENCE TO WHICH SYRIAN WEAPONS POLICIES UNDOUBTEDLY CONTRIBUTED.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 05154 02 OF 02 241558Z

42

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

ACDA-05 SAM-01 SAB-01 MC-02 EB-07 OMB-01 /096 W

----- 023819

R 241512Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5667

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 DAMASCUS 5154

7. SYRIAN DECISION TO SWIM IN MURKY AND TREACHEROUS LEBANESE WATERS, WHERE SUCCESS NOT GUARANTEED AND THREAT TO MAINTENANCE OF TIES WITH LEFTIST PROTEGES ALWAYS PRESENT, HAS BEEN WELCOMED BY LEBANESE OF VARYING POLITICAL PERSUASIONS. LEBANESE VISITORS TO DAMASCUS HAVE INCLUDED MUSLIM, CHRISTIAN AND DRUZE RELIGIOUS LEADERS, MUSA SADR, KAMAL JUMBLATT, PIERRE GEMAYEL, RASHID KARAME, SAEB SALEM, SEVERAL FORMER PRIME MINISTERS AND OTHERS. ASAD HAS ALSO COUNSELED AND PRESSURED ARAFAT AND SAIQA LEADER ZUHAYR MUHSIN. EXPECTED VISITORS INCLUDE MARONITE PATRIARCH KHREISH AND DELEGATION OF LEBANESE "PROGRESSIVES"

ASSOCIATED WITH JUMBLATT. LEBANESE LEADERS HAVE
IN EFFECT "VOTED WITH THEIR FEET" FOR SYRIAN
INVOLVEMENT AND THEIR VISITS SHOW BROAD POLITICAL
SPECTRUM THROUGH WHICH SARG HAS OPERATED IN EFFORT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DAMASC 05154 02 OF 02 241558Z

TO PROMOTE SETTLEMENT.

8. SYRIA HAS ACTED IN OWN SELF-INTEREST IN THIS PROCESS.
SYRIAN WILLINGNESS TO USE ITS POLITICAL CAPITAL HAS BEEN
DEMONSTRATED BY SARG'S PERSISTENCE IN RE-ENTERING MEDIATION
PROCESS AFTER EACH BREAKDOWN RAISED EVER-GROWING SPECTER OF
COMPLETE DETERIORATION WHICH COULD ULTIMATELY
LEAD TO SYRIAN-ISRAELI MILITARY CONFRONTATION
IN LEBANON, A SITUATION WHICH SARG DETERMINED
TO AVOID AT ALL COSTS.

9. WHETHER SARG CAN CREATE FRAMEWORK WITHIN
WHICH LEBANESE CAN MEND THEIR SOCIAL FABRIC
REMAINS TO BE SEEN, BUT IN OUR VIEW SYRIA IS
ONLY COUNTRY POSSESSING BOTH THE NECESSARY POLITICAL
RESOURCES IN LEBANON, ENJOYING A BROAD-SCALE
RESPECT TINGED WITH FEAR NURTURED OVER TIME AMONG LEBANESE
LEFTIST, CENTER AND RIGHTIST POLITICAL FACTIONS,
AND A WILLINGNESS TO EXPEND ITS POLITICAL CAPITAL
TO RESTORE STABILITY THROUGH MUTUAL COMPROMISE.
ABILITY AND/OR WILL OF OTHER OUTSIDERS -- ARAB,
EUROPEAN, SOVIET OR AMERICAN -- TO INFLUENCE COURSE
OF LEBANESE EVENTS IN CONSTRUCTIVE DIRECTION ARE
DISTINCTLY MORE LIMITED.

10. IN SUM, WE JUDGE THAT SYRIA HAS DEPLOYED RANGE
OF POLITICAL, FINANCIAL, DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY
ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, SOME OF WHICH ARE ADMITTEDLY
OF DEBATABLE UTILITY, ALONG WITH JUST PLAIN HARD
WORK TO HALT SLIDE INTO CHAOS IN LEBANON AND DEVELOP
SOME SORT OF HANDLE ON SECURITY/REFORM ISSUES. DAMASCUS
DOES NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE OBSTACLES TO SUCCESS
IN WORKING FOR RECONCILIATION AMONG THE LEBANESE.
ANY OTHER OUTSIDER CONTEMPLATING SIMILAR EFFORT
SHOULD SHARE ITS THOUGHTS WITH SARG.
MURPHY

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, CIVIL DISORDERS, INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 DEC 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: johnsorg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975DAMASC05154
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750447-0227
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751212/aaaaakia.tel
Line Count: 215
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: johnsorg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 MAY 2003 by MartinML>; APPROVED <06 NOV 2003 by johnsorg>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SYRIAN APPROACH TO LEBANON: AN ASSESSMENT
TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE, EG, SA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006